

ESSENCE

LFA supercar inspires RC coupe lineup, which begets 2.0L turbo with edge in price, weight and fuel mileage BY JOE SAGE

The Lexus RC lineup has friends in high places, conceived to carry the spirit of the \$375,000 LFA supercar. Last spring, we spent a week with the top entry in the RC lineup, the Lexus RC F, a bold, curvaceous beast that proved “sexy Lexus” need not be an oxymoron, from its 467-hp V8 to its retracting carbon fiber rear spoiler. Priced at \$64,000-plus, that car turned a lot of heads.

This time, we’re in the Lexus RC 200t, a fuel-friendly four-cylinder twin-scroll intercooled turbo-charged model at the lineup’s entry point—a premium performance coupe with generally the same alluring head-turning sheet metal, features and fitment, but with a price that starts barely above the threes. (Last year, the RC 200t was in the threes, at \$39,995. For 2017, Lexus lost that bragging right but pockets another \$160.) The RC 200t costs just 11 percent what its LFA bragging-mate does and even knocks almost 40 percent off the RC F’s price.

The RC is built on the rear-drive or AWD bones of the IS sedan, though it has the personality and feel of something bigger. The RC is an inch or two longer than the IS, while its wheelbase is shortened by about three inches, which does give it a nice, tight turning circle, useful for a U-turn or in a parking lot, but giving it considerable overhangs—so watch out for that nose in those same parking lots.

There are three engines in the overall RC lineup, rear-drive in some, all-wheel drive in others and a choice between the two in some. Plus

there is an F SPORT version of all but the already maxed RC F—for a total of nine ways to buy a Lexus RC even before the options.

It’s basically simple—a fuel-sipping turbo four-cylinder, a midrange V6 and a performance V8. Some lend themselves



	RC 200t	*RC 300 AWD	*RC 350 RWD	*RC 350 AWD	RC F
Engine	2.0 turbo 4	3.5L V6	3.5L V6	3.5L V6	5.0L V8
Transmission	8-spd DShift	6-spd elec auto	8-spd DShift	6-spd elec auto	8-spd DShift
Drivetrain	RWD	*AWD	*RWD	*AWD	RWD
HP	241 hp	255 hp	306 hp	306 hp	467 hp
Torque	258 lbft	236 lbft	277 lbft	277 lbft	389 lbft
Weight	3737 lb	3891 lb	3748 lb	3891 lb	3958 lb
Weight per hp	15.5 lb	15.3 lb	12.2 lb	12.7 lb	10.2 lb
Zero-to-60	7.3 sec	6.3 sec	5.8 sec	6.0 sec	4.4 sec
MPG (city/hwy/comb)	22/32/26	19/26/21	19/28/22	19/26/21	16/25/19
Base Price	\$40,155	\$42,770	\$43,010	\$45,175	\$64,165
Dollars per hp	\$166.62	\$167.73	\$140.56	\$147.63	\$137.40
Base w/ F Sport	\$44,160	\$46,470	\$47,115	\$48,875	

* RC 200t is RWD only. RC 300 is AWD only. RC 350 is available with RWD or AWD. RC F is RWD only.

The RC 300 AWD may be a case where engineering, marketing and accounting intertwine. Whereas the Lexus RC 350 comes in both RWD and AWD, perhaps the light and nimble bones of the RC 200t don’t lend themselves to an all-wheel-driver. The RC 300 AWD—based on the RC 350’s V6, though detuned by about 17 percent—is basically an all-wheel-drive entry semi-partner to the 200t. The RC 350 AWD weighs just 143 pounds more than the rear-drive 350, a small penalty for all-wheel-drive benefits. The detuned 300 AWD weighs the same (and gets the same fuel mileage) as the 350 AWD. The RC 350 in rear-drive is just eleven pounds heavier than the 200t, a remarkably small penalty for V6 power, though it brings a drop in fuel mileage. We suspect they’re still working on an AWD 200t, which if nothing else would simplify the lineup.

to all-wheel-drive availability, some don’t. Our chart shows variables through the range, some dramatic, some pretty tight.

The four-cylinder 200t has the best front/rear weight ratio in the lineup, and while the others have stronger power-to-weight ratios, the 200t’s torque-to-hp ratio is by far the highest. The 200t is just 221 pounds lighter than the RC F (itself with an aluminum V8), yet its high torque lets it punch below its weight and above its cylinder count.

Nifty style details range from blades in the rear corners and a slim upper brake light in the edge of the rear window, to fully heated, cooled and firmly bolstered sport seats with inlaid stitching in trapezoidal shapes and sweeping curves.

The shifter requires mild orientation, as its path from P to D takes some jogs that can leave you in neutral. Our main frustration is with the touchpad for the screen interface, an improvement over the jiggling joystick it replaces, but still needing work.

We played with drive modes quite a bit, our gut

tending to go for the sport setting, but finding eco operation transparent at steady speeds.

Our Lexus RC strikes a good balance on options. Its F SPORT package brings useful items both cosmetic and performance-enhancing at a fair price. The audio/nav bundle is also both impressive and reasonable. If you want to head a little closer to RC F wannabe territory, ours could add performance exhaust, lowering springs, a rear spoiler and orange brake calipers for \$3233 total, though now you’re within about ten grand of an actual RC F.

Someone on social media said, “I feel like it looks faster than it actually is.” Since the RC is available in a model with almost double the 200t’s horsepower, this may be true, but that’s also this model’s great appeal. Save some dough, save on fuel and still turn heads. Especially with a few options applied (and the Ultrasonic Blue Mica paint seems to help its impact overall), the entry point in the Lexus RC lineup proves itself to be one of the most compelling. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

SEATING CAPACITY	4-passenger
ENGINE	2.0L twin-scroll intercooled turbo 4
DRIVETRAIN	RWD
HP/TORQUE	241 hp / 258 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	8-speed Direct Shift auto
0-TO-60 MPH / TOP SPEED	7.3 sec / 143 mph
SUSPENSION	F: double wishbone, high mount upper arms, coils, gas shocks, stabilizer bar; R: multilink, coils, gas shocks, stabilizer bar
STEERING	rack & pinion elec power
WHEELS	18x8 base/standard, temp spare
BRAKES	F: 14.06" / R: 13.15" vented discs, ABS, EBD, brake assist, ESC, traction
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	184.8 in / 107.5 in
TURNING CIRCLE	34.2 ft
CARGO VOLUME	10.4 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3737 lb
FUEL	91-octane premium
MPG	22/32/26 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE \$40,155

F SPORT PACKAGE: LFA-inspired digital instrumentation, F SPORT front fascia & grille, vehicle dynamics management with sport mode, F SPORT 19-in" split 10-spoke alloy wheels w FR 235/40R19 & R 265/35R19 summer tires, high-performance F SPORT brakes, F SPORT wheel & shift knob, power tilt/tele steering wheel, aluminum pedals, silver performance interior trim, black headliner, bolstered heated/vented seats & drive memory, adaptive variable suspension, active sound control, blind spot monitor w/RCTA, TFT cluster	4105
NAV / PREMIUM AUDIO: Mark Levinson 5.1 Surround 835w 17-speaker Clari-Fi™ high-efficiency audio incl subwoofer and in-dash DVD/CD player, navigation, machined-aluminum knobs, remote touchpad control, voice command, Lexus Insider, app suite, 1-yr trial Lexus Enform Destinations, fuel guide, sports and stocks	2550
BLACK BRAKE CALIPERS	---
LED FOGLAMPS	410
INTUITIVE PARKING ASSIST	500
PREMIUM PAINT	595
TORSEN LIMITED SLIP REAR DIFFERENTIAL	390
MOONROOF	1100
DESTINATION CHARGE	975

TOTAL \$50,780

